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Back Cover: An Affirmation

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An Affirmation

On the nights
you ask me for a head massage
I am grateful for silence,
feel of fingertips on scalp,
easing, smoothing,
the wordlessness of it.

Here in small circles
you yield to my gentle pressure.

Wish I could surrender so easily —
slide away the beads of memories
imbedded in muscle:
the screaming over cereal,
hairbrush slam, trinkets
shuddering on the ledge.

Wish I could ease the grip of sinews
as you pull away from childhood:
“pinecorns” dissolving into piercings,
baby teeth into braces,
hugging close
into holding your own ...

Always you danced as if
no one could see, leaning
into the wind
with your hair tossed back,
laughing at gravity.
You’d genuflect in the leaves
unaware of my watch, grown
serious, at the wonder
and weight of you.

So it is here, in the kneading,
my warm hands can hold
dear and release their grasp
at the same time.

— Kate Marshall Flaherty

